

# Hairless Rat

*Rattus norvegicus*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Hairless rats share all the characteristics of their furry brethren except, of course, for the fur! Curious, intelligent and playful, hairless rats tend to create quite a response from anyone who sees them. This type of rat needs to be kept scrupulously clean and warm.



### Is a hairless rat the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

1. I have an appropriate location and space for a rat.
2. I know that male and female rats should not be housed together.
3. I will provide daily interaction with my rat.
4. I can commit to providing proper care for this rat.
5. A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, a hairless rat may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a hairless rat and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

**Average Size** 8 inches long

**Life Span** Up to 4 years with proper care

**Diet** High-quality rat food/lab blocks

A healthy diet includes 80% dry food and 20% fruits and vegetables such as broccoli, kale, cooked sweet potatoes, grapes, and bananas

Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake

Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily

Do not feed chocolate, alcohol or caffeine as these can cause serious medical problems

**Feeding** Food and water should always be available

In order to maintain a constant body temperature hairless hamsters eat more food than those with hair

Fruits and vegetables not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded

**Housing** Rats acclimate well to average household temperatures; be cautious of extreme temperature changes; habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area

Habitat should be glass, plastic or metal, escape-proof with solid bottom; it is best to provide the largest habitat possible

Rats love to climb; a tall habitat will allow you to create challenges for your rat

1–2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes hardwood shavings or pelleted or recycled product; cedar bedding may cause harm and is not recommended

Different types of small animals should not be housed together

### Recommended Supplies

- |   |                                       |                                      |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate size habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl    | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle | <input type="checkbox"/> Nesting box |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-quality rat food    | <input type="checkbox"/> Vitamins     | <input type="checkbox"/> Chew stick  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about rats          | <input type="checkbox"/> Treats       | <input type="checkbox"/>             |

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### Normal Behavior and Interaction

Commonly active during the night and rest during the day (nocturnal)  
Hide in objects, but may come out when people come near the habitat  
Chew on objects to maintain incisor teeth, which grow continuously; ensure have plenty of chew sticks available  
Have poor eyesight; “sway” to detect objects around them

### Habitat Maintenance

Remove wet spots daily; change bedding weekly or more often, as necessary  
Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to dry completely before placing rat back into the habitat

### Grooming and Hygiene

Rats stay clean and rarely need baths; if skin becomes flaky and dry, wipe with baby wipes containing Aloe or a damp washcloth  
Consult with a veterinarian if a rat’s teeth or nails seem too long  
Because all rats are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your rat and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.  
Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a rat and should consider not having a rat as a pet. For more information regarding rats and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at [http://www.petco.com/pet\\_care\\_info/companion\\_animal\\_care\\_sheets](http://www.petco.com/pet_care_info/companion_animal_care_sheets).

### Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active, alert, and sociable
- Healthy skin
- Clear eyes
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Communicates by squeaking
- Walks normally

### Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to determine cause or treatment.
Malocclusion	Overgrown teeth.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to possibly have teeth trimmed regularly.
Respiratory Disease	Sneezing, cough, red-colored discharge from eyes and nose	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.
Skin lesions	Abnormal lumps, sores on skin.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.

### Red Flags

- Weight loss
- Distressed breathing
- Skin lesions
- Excessive sneezing
- Lethargic
- Overgrown teeth
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Eye or nasal discharge

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

### Sources

*Choosing a Small Mammal* by Dennis Kelsey-Wood  
*Rats* by Susan Fox  
*The Proper Care for Fancy Rats* by Nick Mays

**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.